India's Foreign Policy

3618. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the visits of the Russian President and the British Prime Minister have lent a "great deal of bouyancy" to India's foreign policy in a period of considerable domestic strain;

(b) if so, in what manner and to what extent India's foreign policy has gained ground; and

(c) what strategy Government are going to adopt in future to sustain its foreign policy in that perspective and the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DINESH SINGH) : (a) and (b) The visits of the President of Russia and Prime Minister of U. K. served to underline the close and cordial relations that exist between our countries. During the visits issues of mutual concern were discussed and a broad convergence of views emerged. Both the dignitaries expressed their support for India in areas of our national concern.

(c) The Government will continue to make multi-directional efforts to strengthen friendly ties and intensify bilateral cooperation with a view to sustaining India's political, economic and commercial interests.

Setting up of Regional/Sub-Regional Passport Office at Jabalpur

3619. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the pressing public demands including that from Trade and Commerce in Mahakeshal for setting up a regional/sub-regional passport office at Jabalpur;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) No, Sir. The Government has not received any suggestion for opening of a passport office at Jabalpur.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Construction of Rubats in Mecca and Madina

3620. MOHAMMED AFZAL alias MEEM AFZAL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that former princely State of Tonk Bhopal and Hyderabad etc. have constructed Rubats in Mecca and Madina (Saudi Arabia);

(b) if so, the total number of such Rubats in Saudi Arabia;

(c) how and by when these Rubats are managed;

(d) whether Government have appointed any Rubat Officer for retrieval of the Rubats; and

(e) if so, the present status of management/retrieval of the Indian Rubats may be stated ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) Yes Sir.

In the last 200 years approximately, a number of lodging places were purchased in Makkah, Madinah and Jeddah by Indian princely families and other philanthropists and endowed for stay of Indian pilgrims coming for Haj/Umrah from their respective regions. These houses are known as 'Rubats'.

(b) A list of 100 such Rubats is available in the records of the Consulate General of India, Jeddah. However, only five Rubats are presently functional in Makkah and three in Madinah.

(c) In accordance with Saudi waqf laws, the Rubats are managed by Nazirs (managers) appointed by the donors or their decendants. The Nazirs allow pilgrims coming for Haj/Umrah to stay in these Rubats on the basis of letters of permission issued by the descendants of the donors in India.